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The Populist Party in Indiana

By ERNEST D. STEWART, A. M.

(Concluded.)

FUSION AND CONFUSION

By the year 1895 radicalism in the south and west was well under way. Among other factors, the panic of 1893, the shrinking of the gold reserve from 1893 to 1895, the demonetization of silver by India in June, 1893, and the failure of the corn crop of 1894, had sown dissension in the ranks of the Democrats and strengthened the forces of discontent. Cleveland was repudiated by the bulk of his party, his attitude toward free silver, made plain as far back as February, 1891 by his letter on free coinage, particularly alienating the free silver wing. A new democracy was arising, based on new ideas and looking for new leaders. The repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase law in October, 1893, was bitterly denounced as was also the Morgan-Belmont agreement in February, 1895, by which \$62,000,000 in gold was obtained from the bankers in payment for thirty-year four per cent bonds. As the campaign year of 1896 drew near, it was clearly foreseen that the free coinage of silver would be the one big issue. It was the subject on every one's lips; the newspapers were full of it. Again and again petitions were sent to congress praying for the passage of silver legislation, and free coinage bills were introduced into congress galore. In the face of the popular clamor, the Republicans and the conservative element among the Democrats were making strenuous but futile efforts to keep party issues confined to the Tariff. How blind and mistaken was their policy is shown by the reception given at Chicago in June, 1896, to Bryan's populist speech which stamped the convention.

An important factor in the shaping of public opinion in favor of free coinage was the publication in 1894 of a pamphlet entitled *Coin's Financial School*. It purported to be

an account of a series of platform lectures delivered in Chicago by a young and brilliant financier, Coin, to a class of prominent local and national business men. By apt illustrations and well-turned remarks Coin answers their objections, parries their thrusts and overwhelms them with arguments in favor of free silver. There was much superficial reasoning and charlatanism, as well as much that was sound in the book, but it was read by farmers, laborers, business men, college professors, and it converted thousands.

In 1895 an extraordinary session of the State central committee was called for September 2. A. E. Taubeneck, of Illinois, the chairman of the national executive committee was present and made the principal address. The chief significance of the meeting lay in the platform which was formulated. This document in the main contained none but already well-worn populist doctrines. The free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1 was demanded, as well as the issuance of legal tender treasury notes to the amount of \$50 per capita, a guaranteed income tax and the initiative and referendum. The issuance of interest bearing bonds and bank currency, the recent deal of the administration with the bankers and the decision against the income tax were bitterly denounced.⁴

There were rumors afloat at this meeting of fusion with the Prohibitionists, but even if the rumors were not exaggerated in the newspaper reports through political bias,⁵ there is nothing to indicate that they were anything more than the merest gossip.

For the campaign of 1896 the Populists in Indiana had a good State organization. Besides the State central committee, at the head of which was N. T. Butts¹ of Winchester with F. J. S. Robinson of Cloverland as secretary, there were local organizations in practically all of the counties. Never were prospects brighter for a Populist victory than in 1896. Among the Populist organs of the State should be mentioned *Nonconformist*,² the national organ of the party, located at Indian-

⁴ The Indianapolis Journal, Sept 3, 1895.

¹ Died in 1902.

² Moved from Kansas in 1890 by L. Vincent. The *Nonconformist* was destined for a checkered career. Vincent was succeeded as editor by L. S. Stockwell, who in time gave way to Claude X. Matthews. During the fall of 1896 Matthews was ousted.

apolis, the *Referendum* at Shoals, edited by N. H. Motsinger, and the *Logansport Advance*, edited by A. N. Roup.³

While the question of fusion with the Prohibitionists was insignificant, one of the great issues confronting the Populists in the late summer and fall of 1896 was the problem of amalgamation with the Democrats. In order to understand this development it will be necessary first, to say a word in regard to the respective national conventions of the Democrats and Populists, and second, to review briefly the events of the Populist State convention.

As has been pointed out the date of the national convention had been set for July 22, 1896. The time of meeting was purposely set for a date subsequent to the holding of the two other conventions in order for it to be ascertained what action the two old parties, particularly the Democrats, would take.

It would be beyond the scope of this paper to give any detailed account of the proceedings at the Democratic convention at Chicago. The reader is familiar with the exciting events of that convention culminating in Bryan's dramatic speech which won for him the nomination. When the Populist convention met two weeks later it was found that there was no more desirable nor acceptable candidate among the Populists themselves than Bryan, the Democratic nominee. It was the nomination by the Democrats, however, of Arthur Sewall, a rich shipbuilder and ex-banker, for Vice-President which constituted the Gordian knot. Sewall was as much an object of hatred in the eyes of the Populists as Bryan was a Messiah.

Sewall being unacceptable the convention was obliged to look about for other vice-presidential timber. Mort C. Rankin, of Terre Haute, was the first to suggest to the convention the plan of nominating a southern man with Bryan,⁶ and S. W. Williams, of Vincennes, contributed the idea of reversing the usual order of procedure and nominating the Vice-President first.⁷ This was done in order to placate the "middle-of-the-road" element. The Bryan people were pacified by securing the permanent chairman. The man finally chosen

³ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Sept. 3, 1895.

⁵ The Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Sept. 3, 1895.

⁶ Indianapolis *Journal*, July 31, 1896.

⁷ Indianapolis *Journal*, Aug. 1, 1896.

for Vice-President was Thomas E. Watson, of Georgia.⁸ Bryan was triumphantly nominated for President.

THE PROBLEM OF FUSION

It was under these circumstances that the Populist State convention met July 28 at Indianapolis. From the start it was seen that a struggle was to ensue between the fusionists and the anti-fusionists, or "middle-of-the-roaders" as they had come to be called. Upon the convention rested, to a great extent, the responsibility of deciding whether the party was to be absorbed by the Democrats or preserve its identity. The majority of the Populists, while flattered by the fact that the Democrats were now in a position where they must come to them on bended knees, and although naturally drawn to the Democrats because of common hostility toward the Republicans were afraid nevertheless that amalgamation with a third party would mean the death-blow of Populism.

Much was made by the enemies of the party of an agreement alleged to have been made at St. Louis between the Populists and Democrats. A speech made by D. H. Fernandes, of Anderson, State member of the national executive committee, setting forth a plan whereby the electors in the various States were to be Democratic or Populistic according to the strength of their respective parties, was magnified and construed by the Republicans to mean that the Populists were to be repaid for their nomination of Bryan by the withdrawal of Sewall.⁹

While there doubtless was an agreement made between the national committee of the two parties at St. Louis in regard to presidential electors, we may reject this second conclusion as an effort on the part of the Republicans to discredit both parties. What was particularly galling, the Republicans insinuated further that Sewall was not as distasteful to the Populists as they would have it believed.

All during the time of the convention the Democrats were hanging on the outskirts ready and willing to bargain. At one point in the deliberations Franklin Landers, former Democratic candidate for governor came forward and addressed the

⁸ Thomas E. Watson, of Thompson, Georgia, was born in 1856. He began the practice of law in 1876. He sat in the Georgia legislature 1882-83 and was a member of the Fifty-second congress as a Democrat.

⁹ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 29, 1896.

convention in behalf of fusion. He pleaded for the endorsement by the Populists of the Democratic State ticket in return for which the Democrats would divide the legislative nominations so both could poll for a silver Senator.¹⁰ The Democrats also offered to divide the legislative ticket if the convention would adjourn without nominating.¹¹

The Populists were disposed to turn a cold shoulder to the advances of the Democrats. They realized, it was true, that both the Democrats and the Populists agreed on the vital issues. As a matter of fact, the only points on which they differed were those of government ownership, fiat paper money, and the sub-treasury plan. Then again fusion would mean no separate campaign fund since the Democrats would pay the expenses of speakers, etc.¹² On the other hand they saw that fusion would make it impossible for Populists to fight for local tickets, it would destroy the Populist press and in case of the election of Bryan would make it out of place for them to demand appointments.

It was evident that the Populists had the best of the bargain. The way affairs had shaped themselves, they had everything to gain and little to lose. It was the Democrats now whose turn it was to look well to their fences. This accounts for the serene attitude of the Populists in the convention and the speedy rout of the fusionists. It was small wonder that the efforts of the Democrats to prevent the setting up of a Populist State ticket and to get their own endorsed came to nothing. The case with reference to the presidential electors was no different, even though we leave out of account the Vice-Presidential imbroglio. By putting independent electoral tickets in the field it was possible for the Populists to deprive Bryan of a majority of the electors even though he had a majority of the aggregate vote.

With the exception of an anti-fusion plank declaring that "the People's party of Indiana is emphatically in favor of maintaining its organization national, State and local," there was little in the platform that was new.¹³

¹⁰ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 29, 1896.

¹¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 29, 1896.

¹² *Indianapolis Journal*, Sept. 25, 1896.

¹³ The following are the more important planks in the platform:

The issuance of bonds and notes were emphatically denounced. The argument was advanced that a debt, represented by these issues, should never be

The sub-treasury plan, advocated in 1892 was not mentioned.

Although a plank which might be construed as anti-fusionist was adopted, the convention took one very important step toward amalgamation with the Democrats. The middle-of-the-roads, who dominated the convention, had won out not only in getting a State ticket put up but also by defeating the plan of endorsing the Democratic platform. Partial success attended the efforts of their adversaries, however, when, near the close of the convention came the appointment of a conference committee to decide upon the selection of presidential electors.

On July 28, late in the day a resolution had been moved "that the convention appoint a conference committee, . . . to confer with the Democratic State central committee . . . to the end that we secure . . . the overthrow of the Republican party and the present gold standard." After a fight which lasted until one o'clock in the morning the resolution was lost and the following adopted: "Resolved, that this convention appoint a committee consisting of one in each congressional district to have power to act for this convention in the

made the basis of a circulating medium since the medium as money can never be equal except for a short time to the debt. The debt increases through the accumulation of interest and the medium decreased by wear and tear.

As an alternative to the above financial policy the unrestricted coinage of gold and silver was demanded at the ratio of 16 to 1.

Other demands were, the ownership and operation of all natural monopolies, railroads, telegraph, telephone, etc., by the government, the initiative and referendum, industrial arbitration and the increase of the volume of money to correspond to the needs of business.

The old demand for exemption of bona-fide indebtedness from taxation was reiterated together with equal representation of all parties on election boards. The party also declared in favor of the reduction of officials' salaries to correspond to the fall in prices, the enforcement of the laws prohibiting child labor, and the granting of contracts for public printing to the lowest bidder **except** where the lowest bidder employed non-union labor.

After some little difficulty in finding candidates the following ticket was made out:

For governor, Rev. Thomas Wadsworth, of Raglesville; lieutenant-governor, A. P. Hanna, of Waveland; auditor of state, N. M. Jennings, of Franklin; secretary of state, Silas M. Holcomb, of Gibson county; treasurer of state, F. J. S. Robinson, of Cloverland; attorney-general, D. H. Fernandes, of Anderson; reporter of the supreme court, Thomas W. Force, Loogootee; state statistician, J. S. McKeever, of the Third district; superintendent of public instruction, J. B. Freeman, of Guy; appellate judges, A. J. Padgett, of Washington; Nelson Borsard, of Valparaiso; Adam Stockinger, of Versailles; N. Pierce, of Terre Haute; John Thornburg, of Anderson.

Indianapolis Sentinel, July 29, 1896.

matter of presidential electors, each district delegation to select its own representative."

This was the famous "committee of thirteen" about which the storm centered during the summer and fall.¹⁴

The situation created by the course of events at the convention continued up until September when the next important developments took place. Meanwhile the political pot was bubbling merrily throughout the State. Everywhere the question of fusion was the paramount issue. In some localities the tendency among the Populists was to hold aloof. At Kokomo, at Brazil, and at Rockport the Democrats tried in vain to induce the Populists to fuse.¹⁵ At Anderson the Populists refused to join a Bryan and Sewall club but formed a Bryan and Watson club instead.¹⁶ The middle-of-the-road faction was too strong for fusion at Thorntown and in the face of opposition continued to run W. B. Gill, of Montgomery, as the senatorial candidate.¹⁷

On the other hand most localities succumbed to fusion. The party at Shelbyville did not put out a separate county ticket but supported the Democrats. There was a bitter contest on at Shelbyville between C. A. Robinson, president of the F. M. B. A., and George H. Puntenny, of Rush county, the Democratic candidate for congress, yet in the course of the campaign Robinson did not disdain to speak at a Democratic meeting.¹⁸

The machinery set up by the State convention for coming to an agreement with the Democrats in regard to presidential electors got in motion when on September 17 sub-committees from both the Populist and Democratic parties met in conference. The original committee of thirteen, appointed by the convention had selected in turn a sub-committee of three. As the basis of their demands the Populists were armed with the outline of an agreement formulated by S. W. Williams, of

¹⁴ The following were the men appointed on this committee: P. H. Carroll-Evansville; Allie Bunger, Worthington; F. M. Garriett, Little York; Richard Gregg, Aurora; A. T. Keightler, Greencastle; Sam Walker, Charlottesville; W. F. Polk, Franklin; N. T. Butts, Winchester; A. G. Burkhardt, Tipton; H. D. Craig, Rensselaer; Julius Rosenheiner, Center; Charles Morgan, Metz; L. W. Hubbell, Francisville. Julius Rosenheiner was chairman of the committee.

¹⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, Oct. 10, Aug. 21 and 31, 1896.

¹⁶ *Indianapolis Journal*, Sept. 14, 1896.

¹⁷ *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 17, 1896. Gill was elected, the only Indiana State senator to be elected by the party in the course of its existence.

¹⁸ *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 17, 1896.

Vincennes.¹⁹ The heads of this proposal were: (1) It was understood that William J. Bryan was the Populist candidate for President and Thomas E. Watson the candidate for Vice-President; that Bryan was the Democratic candidate for President and Arthur Sewall the candidate for Vice-President. (2) That there were to be the same and identical names of electors on both tickets. (3) That each party was to select one-half of the electoral candidates: the Populists those in districts with even numbers and the Democrats those in districts with odd numbers. (4) That after the election and prior to the State meeting of electors a committee of four count the electors voted for under the Bryan and Sewall column and then those under the Bryan and Watson column. As between Sewall and Watson the largest Bryan electoral vote was to elect.²⁰

To meet this proposition the Democrats had no better offer than the yielding of four electors provided the Populists would withdraw their State ticket. The Populists met this by contending that the State convention had delegated to the committee of thirteen, power only in regard to electors. Therefore they had no authority to withdraw the State ticket.²¹ In the same way the Democrats met the demand for the withdrawal of Sewall by arguing that the Democratic State committee had no authority over Sewall. In spite of what the Populists had said in regard to their State ticket they offered to withdraw it provided they might have all fifteen electors. This proposal the Democrats rejected. After an evening's haggling the two parties were no nearer an agreement than before.²²

The above was the work of a committee of three appointed by the committee of thirteen. Later in the evening the latter met and appointed a committee of five,²³ to try to get better terms with the Democrats. They were instructed to reject any offer so long as Sewall remained on the ticket.²⁴

At this point a scandal arose through reports that influen-

¹⁹ Populist candidate for Vice-President in 1908; at present (1917) deceased.

²⁰ *The Shoals Referendum*, Aug. 13, 1896.

²¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, Sept. 18, 1896.

²² *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Sept. 18, 1896.

²³ The members of this committee were: A. G. Burkhart, Simon Walker, Julius Rosenheiner, C. F. Folk, and L. W. Hubbell. None of these men were fusionists.

²⁴ *Indianapolis News*, Sept. 18, 1896.

tial Populists, particularly members of the committee of thirteen, were being bribed by the Republicans to use their influence in preventing fusion. Silas M. Shepherd, it was said, was approached by a man who offered him a generous salary for such services. L. W. Hubbell, of Pulaski county, and Julius Rosenheiner, it was alleged, were also approached. Naturally, most of the charges appeared in the *Sentinel* while the *Journal* was silent on the subject. However, the *News*, the independent organ, came out on September 20 with a bitter editorial denouncing the attempted corruption.

Thus the whole affair hung fire until the last of September. The Populists seemed to know their mind well in regard to one thing at least and that was that they would not support Sewall. To a man the party supported the *Nonconformist* in its stand that Sewall get off the ticket.²⁵ One reason for this attitude was that fusion meant repudiation of Watson. The attitude of Watson toward the whole fusion movement, more or less prevalent over the whole country, can well be imagined.²⁶ In a telegram sent to Governor Claude X. Matthews, Watson had said, "On principle I am dead against fusion with Sewall electors. Where I submit to fusion I do so under protest."²⁷

The explanation of the Democratic overtures is, that they felt themselves in pretty much of a dilemma. Watson was as obnoxious to them as Sewall was to the Populists. Then, too, they were loath to repudiate Sewall since he was the only real Democrat on the ticket, even barring his protectionist proclivities. On the other hand, alienation of the third party men in the close States would be very apt to mean a Democratic defeat.

Nor were the Populists insensible of the gravity of the situation from their point of view. They realized that fusion would make strong the chances of Bryan's election, resulting in the partial triumph of their principles. But they realized, too, that partial success meant total oblivion so far as their independent party existence was concerned. Fusion meant that all would be staked on the election of Bryan.

Whatever the considerations, within two weeks after the

²⁵ Indianapolis *Journal*, Sept. 17, 1896.

²⁶ It was said that Indiana, by Sept. 30, was the only State in the Union in which fusion had not been accomplished. Indianapolis *Journal*, Sept. 30, 1896.

²⁷ Indianapolis *News*, Sept. 30, 1896.

last meeting of the conference committee a change of heart had come over the leaders sufficient to cause them to listen more willingly to the overtures of the Democrats.²⁸

Definite but not final action was taken September 29. The agreement then entered into had to do only with presidential electors. The State tickets of both parties were not affected.²⁹ The conference committees of the two parties decided that the electoral ticket was to be made up of ten Democrats and five Populists,³⁰ the same and identical names appearing under both the rooster and the plow and hammer.³¹

These arrangements, it must be understood, were not as yet ratified by the Democratic State committee. In one sense they may be considered final inasmuch as they were not subsequently changed yet the Democrats were not satisfied. Though urged by Chairman Jones, of the Democratic national committee, to accept the terms of fusion offered, the committee still declined because the Populist State ticket remained up.³² It is not surprising, therefore, that the next ten days saw strenuous efforts put forth by the Democrats towards inducing the Populists to withdraw their State ticket. Numerous conferences in committee were held and the air was thick with political intrigue. The Populists were given to understand that they could hope for no further concessions as long as their State ticket was up. On this point the Democratic reasoning was as follows: In 1894 the Democrats cast 238,000 votes in Indiana, the Populists cast 30,000, about one-eighth as many; yet the Populists wanted one-third of the electors when they already had more than one-third of the congressional nominees, and in the legislature fusions in every case had the best of the bargain.

²⁸ The negotiations were conducted on the Democratic side by a campaign committee consisting of the following members: Governor Claude X. Matthews, Thomas Taggart, James Murdock, John E. Lamb, D. F. Allen. *Indianapolis Journal*, Sept. 28, 1896.

²⁹ At the eleventh hour an effort was made by some one to withdraw the Populist State ticket. Since the only way this could be done was by the resignation of the candidates, the convention not having delegated this power to any committee, the result was a flat failure. *Indianapolis Journal*, Sept. 29, 1896.

³⁰ James W. Hanson, Dem.; E. A. Riggins, Pop.; G. B. McIntire, Dem.; Thomas Cope, Pop.; D. E. Williamson, Dem.; G. W. Pigman, Dem.; M. Donnelly, Dem.; B. H. Campbell, Dem.; W. C. Smith, Dem.; J. W. Pierce, Pop.; M. H. Kidd, Dem.; F. B. Van Auken, Dem.; J. S. Bender, Pop. Electors at large, J. B. Stahl, Dem.; P. D. Drain, Pop. *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Sept. 30, 1896.

³¹ Shoals *Referendum*, Oct. 22, 1896.

³² *Indianapolis Journal*, Oct. 5, 1896.

The fusionists left no stone unturned in trying to prevail upon the candidates on the State ticket to withdraw. On October 8, Julius Rosenheiner, the new chairman of the State committee called the State executive committee and the candidates together at the English Hotel. Here M. C. Rankin endeavored to persuade the candidates to withdraw. He pointed out that if the State ticket came down five of the Bryan electors would give way to five straight Populists. Threats and pressure of various sorts proving unavailing it was arranged to have the candidates call on W. J. Bryan who, on his presidential campaign tour through the State, happened to be in Indianapolis at the time. Although Bryan at his hotel had retired for the night at ten o'clock, the candidates were taken into his presence and briefly addressed by him.³³ Bryan's remarks were characteristic. He said the work of fusion, begun at St. Louis, had been completed in every State except Indiana. Nothing should stand in the way, he said, of unity and harmony of the forces fighting the battles of the people against the gold standard.

After this talk with Bryan the candidates were requested to confer among themselves and then say definitely what action they would take.³⁴ The whole proceeding failed to impress them.

All efforts to put the State ticket out of the way was cut short when, on October 8, Silas M. Holcomb, the Populist candidate for secretary of state, filed in the governor's office the certificates of nomination. A few days later the electoral ticket of ten Democrats and five Populists was filed. Thus the only possible way in which the State ticket could be disposed of was by the resignation of the candidates. Naturally this could hardly be expected, since the candidates were practically all middle-of-the-road men.³⁵

The filing of the certificates of nomination threw the Democrats into a new dilemma. The acceptance of the combination Populist ticket would be greatly to their advantage, inasmuch as many voters, wishing to vote for the five Populist electors would at the same time vote a straight ticket under the rooster, thereby giving the Democratic State ticket the

³³ This is familiarly known as the "bedroom conference."

³⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, Oct. 7, 1896.

³⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, Oct. 5, 1896.

benefit. On the other hand if the Populist electoral ticket were rejected, each party putting up straight tickets, many Populists having no incentive now for marking the ballot under the rooster would vote a straight ticket under the plow and hammer thereby giving the Populist State ticket the benefit.

But there was still another consideration. The acceptance of fusion would alienate votes from Bryan and Sewall since many persons would not vote a ticket with Populist names on it.³⁶

Meanwhile the question of fusion continued the one big issue throughout the State. At Marion fusion was accomplished by the nomination of two Democratic senators, three Democratic representatives and two Populist representatives.³⁷ By October 10, fusion had been accomplished in every one of the close legislative districts.³⁸ However, the faithful in a few localities held out. In spite of the efforts of Julius Rosenheiner and Mort C. Rankin the Populists at Evansville declined to fuse.³⁹ But such cases were few and isolated. Fusion was the order of the day.

Now that fusion had been accomplished, various were the characterizations of it by its enemies and bitter were the denunciations heaped upon the leaders who had brought it about. The partial fusion in the matter of the presidential electors and the outright amalgamation in many local districts were said to be the shameless work of mercenary leaders and not of the masses.⁴⁰ The middle-of-the-road men led by Claude X. Matthews, the editor of the *Nonconformist*, the national organ of the party, declared that fusion was a mercantile betrayal of Watson at the behest of the national committee.⁴¹

Another charge was that the fusion which had taken place was illegal. On the Populist ticket it was pointed out were ten names never nominated by a Populist convention and on the Democratic ticket were five names never nominated by a Democratic convention. There were three ways only, it was contended, in which a ticket could be nominated: by a nominating convention, with the ticket certified by the chairman

³⁶ Indianapolis *Journal*, Oct. 9, 1896.

³⁸ Indianapolis *Journal*, Oct. 10, 1896.

³⁷ Indianapolis *Journal*, Oct. 11, 1896.

³⁹ Indianapolis *Journal*, Oct. 10, 1896.

⁴⁰ Indianapolis *Journal*, Oct. 3, 1896.

⁴¹ Indianapolis *Journal*, Oct. 5, 1896.

and the secretary of the convention; by a primary election ticket certified by the chairman and the secretary of the county committee; or by a petition containing at least five hundred names.

Then again, the fact that there were names appearing twice on the ballot—once in the Populist column and once in the Democratic column—was urged as a violation of Section 19 of the election law which provided that the name of no candidate appear on two tickets or on the ballot in two places.⁴²

The whole matter was a knotty problem without exact precedent and one which presented many difficulties. No legal action was ever taken to determine the illegality of the fusionist arrangements and so the situation was allowed to drift until election day.⁴³

The results of the election held November 3 were awaited with the keenest interest. Party feeling ran high and there was much excitement. It was the fad among the farmers in various parts of the State to put up signs in front of their homes bearing the motto, "16-to-1."⁴⁴ The widespread interest in the issues involved, and the publicity given to political affairs by the dickering and haggling over fusion, brought out an unusually full vote. The returns on the Populist State ticket, however, were disappointing. Scarcely one-fourth of the Populists voted the middle-of-the-road State ticket, although all voted for Bryan and for the fusionist county ticket.⁴⁵ Thomas Wadsworth, the candidate for governor, received only 8,626 votes, about 1.3 per cent. of the total. The vote cast for the other candidates did not vary much from that figure. In the legislative districts, as the result of fusion, the Populists achieved some successes. They managed to elect one State senator, W. B. Gill, and sent eight representatives to the lower house.⁴⁶ In the secretary of state's abstract of vote all these men were listed as Democrats.

When the smoke of battle cleared after the election the Populists shared with the Democrats a feeling of chagrin.

⁴² *Indianapolis Journal*, Oct. 5, 1896.

⁴³ The next year the legislature passed an act definitely making such fusion in the future illegal.

⁴⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 15, 1896.

⁴⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 9, 1896.

⁴⁶ These men were John C. Engle, David Haifly, David D. Hart, George J. Kayser, Richard Mieler, Sanford Patterson, Albert Schoonover, Sylvester V. Titus. Abstract of vote, *Indiana Documentary Journal*, 1896. Part I.

Twenty-five thousand votes properly distributed would have given the election to Bryan and assured the victory of populist ideas.⁴⁷ Again, many Populists were not feeling quite right in regard to fusion. More and more they came to realize, a conviction strengthened by the later history of the radical movement, that fusion with the Democrats in 1896 sounded the death knell of the party. Never again did the Populists have the vitality, the courage and the strength of the earlier years.

However, after the election the workers in the movement, undaunted, proceeded to reorganize and take stock of their forces. The fight for free silver, they felt, must go on. In response to a call to all silver advocates about seventy delegates gathered in conference on December 29 at the Hotel English, Indianapolis.⁴⁸ The chief feature of the meeting was the skirmishing between the fusionists headed by Julius Rosenheiner and the middle-of-the-roaders led by Newell H. Motsinger. Rosenheiner had taken care that the call was cleverly worded so as to apply "to all silver advocates," consequently many "half-breeds" were present. Motsinger, always spoiling for a fight, led the attack on Rosenheiner with a view to procuring his resignation from the office of chairman of the State committee. Rosenheiner only sat tight, however, reminding his foes that he was on the job to stay until 1898. Consequently the Motsinger forces were defeated. A set of harmless resolutions mainly educational in their nature were adopted to the effect that "all organizations of whatever name or party, having the same patriotic purposes ought to be encouraged" and that clubs be formed throughout the State without reference to party affiliations for the purpose of studying economic questions.⁴⁹ Motsinger insisted on having these called the "People's party clubs" but was outvoted. The trend of the meeting is apparent. From now on until the day of its gradual decay and death, the People's party was to be torn by two factions, the middle-of-the-roaders and the fusionists.

⁴⁷ Shoals *Referendum*, Dec. 10, 1896.

⁴⁸ Indianapolis *News*, Dec. 29, 1896.

⁴⁹ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Dec. 30, 1896.

THE LAST STAGES: 1898, 1900, AND 1902

After 1896 the decline of the People's party was rapid. The party, torn by internal dissensions, saw its following melt away, the individuals, for the most part, returning whence they came. However, after the wreck of 1896, the more optimistic element in the party looked forward with high hopes to the election of 1900. Bryan, they thought, coming so near the presidency in 1896 would acquire a strength by 1900 sufficient for his triumph. In the years from 1896 to 1900, however, conditions arose which conspired to disappoint them. Beginning with 1896 a tide of prosperity set in which cut the ground from under the Populists' feet. The pendulum was now on the return swing. Prices rose and trade assumed normal proportions. The discovery of gold in Alaska assured an abundant supply of money and robbed of its point the strongest plank in the Populist platform. Consequently the emphasis in the later history of the party ceased to be on economic matters but instead the main issues came to be political. The initiative and referendum especially came in for a large share of attention as did also woman's suffrage and the direct election of public officials. Within the party itself the great disrupting influence was the question of fusion.

In the State convention of 1898,¹ held on February 22, a fight early developed between the middle-of-the-roaders and the fusionists. The former faction was led by Newell H. Motsinger, editor of the *Shoals Referendum*, while the fusionists were ably headed by Julius Rosenheiner, chairman of the State central committee.² Motsinger came to the convention with a solid delegation of one hundred and seventeen men at his back.³ In securing this following he had shrewdly taken advantage of a loophole in the call. The call, instead of basing the representation in the convention upon the Populist vote in previous years, permitted the attendance of one delegate from each township and ward.⁴ Motsinger by more strictly and efficiently complying with the terms of the call than the leaders in the other districts, was able to secure a disproportion-

¹ The Indianapolis *Journal* characterized the delegates to this convention as "derelicts of an organization that is fast disappearing."

² Indianapolis *Journal*, Feb. 23, 1898.

³ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Feb. 23, 1898.

⁴ Indianapolis *Journal*, Feb. 23, 1898.

ate representation that dominated the convention. The middle-of-the-roaders were intent upon the accomplishment of two things. In the first place they wanted to get rid of the then sitting national committeemen, D. H. Fernandes, Joshua Strange and W. S. Austin, who had been connected with the disastrous deal with the Democrats in 1896. These men were wanted off the national committee in order to make way for others who would help reorganize the committee against Butler and Bryan. The right to do this was based on a resolution of the national convention allowing State conventions to elect committees.⁵ The ideal of the middle-of-the-roaders was a straight national ticket in 1900. Then, secondly, they wanted a resolution against fusion on State, county, and township tickets.⁶ Fusion, they claimed would lead to the further ruin of the party; at any rate, if it was to be taken up at all it was a question to be decided by the counties and local districts. These units knew what was best for them, and the State convention had no right to interfere with their affairs.⁷

The matter of the national committeemen was finally settled by the re-election of Joshua Strange and W. S. Austin and the election of A. G. Burkhardt to take the place of D. H. Fernandes. Two fusionists were thus left on the committee, yet it was practically a victory for Motsinger. The whole affair simply amounted to the ditching of Fernandes.⁸

Co-workers with Rosenheiner in opposition to the anti-fusionists were Editor Vincent of the *Nonconformist*, and S. M. Shepard. The fusionists believed in keeping up the party organization, but in using it mainly as a club to enforce Democratic compliance. This was the stand taken by Marion Butler, the national chairman.

The platform as adopted consisted of the following planks:

The Omaha and St. Louis platforms were reaffirmed. The initiative and referendum, woman's suffrage and the abolition of the liquor traffic⁹ were demanded. Legislative regulation and radical reduction of the telegraph and telephone tolls

⁵ Indianapolis *Journal*, Feb. 22, 1898.

⁶ Indianapolis *JJournal*, Feb. 22, 1898.

⁷ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Feb. 23, 1898. From Democratic sources one hears charges that Motsinger was taking his course through bribery and that the delegation with which he packed the convention were paid Republicans. In Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Feb. 22 and 23, 1898.

⁸ Indianapolis *Journal*, Feb. 22 and 23, 1898.

⁹ Accomplished by the Legislature of 1917.

within the State was favored, as was also the reduction of railroad passenger rates to two cents a mile.¹⁰ The abolition of the practice of issuing money to national banks was called for.¹¹ The convention also demanded a maximum legal rate of interest of six per cent. Further, it expressed itself as opposed to "government by injunction" and in favor of the election of federal judges by direct vote of the people. Other demands were, that county school superintendents be elected by popular vote, that the soldiers be paid the difference between the money they were paid in and coin and that public printing be let to the lowest bidder. One plank in the platform denounced the Republican administration for its indifference in Cuba, whose independence was demanded. In regard to the old demand for free coinage of silver, a plank bordering upon evasiveness was adopted. The Populist party was declared "the only party in the United States which was a unit for the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1." Harmless as this declaration was, the Motsinger faction tried its best to keep it out.¹²

Motsinger and his followers were successful, however, in pushing through a qualified anti-fusion plank. Under his lead the committee on resolutions submitted a minority report recommending that a straight Populist State ticket be put out carrying simon pure candidates under the party's name and emblem. Before adoption it was amended to the effect that "Populists in cities, counties and townships may unite with other persons to defeat dishonest and incompetent officials."¹³ The virus of fusion it seems could not be eliminated.

The ticket put out by the convention was as follows:

Secretary of State, Dr. H. H. Morrison, of Greencastle;
Auditor of State, W. H. H. Parks, of Bloomington;
Treasurer of State, Frank M. Brown, of Sullivan;
Attorney-General, Tillman P. Ballard, of Montgomery county;
Clerk of the Supreme Court, Robert W. Todd, of Miami;
Superintendent of Public Instruction, Edward Packard, of Winamac;
Geologist, J. H. Allen, of Terre Haute;
Statistician, L. C. Adams, of Harrison county.

¹⁰ Enacted into law in 1907.

¹¹ This plank took the place of one stricken out. The original plank provided for the issuing of money by the government at one per cent on farm mortgages to the amount of one-third the cash value of the lands. Such mortgage notes were to be legal tender for all debts, public and private.

¹² *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Feb. 23, 1898.

¹³ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Feb. 23, 1898.

The nomination of supreme and appellate court judges was left to the State committee. Such was the ticket nominated by the State convention of 1898.¹⁴

In the period which elapsed between the convention and the election but few developments of any great importance took place within the State.¹⁵ In the ensuing election, November 8, the vote on the Populist ticket was light, Morrison receiving but 5,867 votes.¹⁶ For the first time the Populists dropped behind the Prohibitionists, whose vote totaled 9,961. From a vote of less than three hundred in 1896, the Socialists in this election rose to a strength of 1,795. Defection of Populists to their ranks may have caused a slight falling off in the Populist vote, though in view of the smallness of the vote of both parties this consideration possesses little importance.

THE STATE CONVENTION OF 1900

Like the convention of 1898, the State convention in 1900 was held on the anniversary of Washington's birth, and in the declaration of principles which it drew up were included many of the former conventions' demands. For the first time in the history of the party, every district in the State was represented.¹ The demands with respect to allegiance to the Omaha and St. Louis platforms, the initiative and referendum, free coinage, hostility to national banks, pensions, the economical administration of State affairs, public printing and the election of county superintendents were reiterated. In addition, there were planks demanding the direct election of the President and Vice-President, the municipal ownership of public utilities, the acceptance of nominations by public letter, stricter enforcement of the factory and eight-hour laws, and local self-government for the Philippines. The former items of woman's suffrage, two-cent passenger fare, exemption from bonafide indebtedness, six per cent interest, abolition of the liquor traffic, direct election of federal judges, the Cuban

¹⁴ The Democratic convention was held June 21, the Republican on Aug. 3.

¹⁵ At Cincinnati, however, on Sept. 4, two years ahead of time, a presidential nominating convention of the party was held. Wharton Barker was nominated for President and Ignatius Donnelly for Vice-President. The middle-of-the-roads controlled the convention. The most bitter denunciation was heaped upon Marion C. Butler as the man who sold out the Populists in 1896. Butler and his faction withdrew from the convention. The events were a fitting prelude to the schism of 1900.

¹⁶ Report of the Secretary of State, *Documentary Journal* for 1898.

¹ *Indianapolis News*, Feb. 22, 1900.

question, and fusion, were not mentioned. There was good reason for silence on the subject of exemption from indebtedness. The legislature of 1899, yielding at least to popular pressure, passed an act exempting mortgages from taxation to the amount of \$700.

Few of the old leaders' names appear on the ticket. The name of A. G. Burkhardt, the candidate for Governor, is the only one familiar from association with the early deliberations of the party. The remainder of the ticket was as follows:²

Lieutenant-Governor, C. M. Walter;
Secretary of State, W. T. Carmichael;
Auditor of State, John W. Wales;
Attorney-General, G. F. Boyer;
Reporter of Supreme Court, Charles E. Hoffman;
Superintendent of Public Instruction, William P. Beasley;
State Statistician, A. L. D. Grindle.

The nomination of the judicial officers was left to the State central committee.

THE SPLIT IN THE PARTY

The year 1900 in the history of the Populist party was characterized by internal dissensions resulting in a schism which was never healed. As in 1898, the disturbing factor was the question of fusion. The struggle was precipitated at the meeting of the national committee at Lincoln, Neb., on February 19. The efforts of the fusionists to exclude members and their proxies who, as delegates in the Cincinnati convention of 1898, had voted for Barker and Donnelly, led to the walk-out of J. A. Parker, of Kentucky, followed by four proxies.³ The result was that 1900 saw two Populist national conventions—one at Cincinnati, Ohio, held May 9, and one at Sioux Falls, S. D., on the same date. The middle-of-the-rovers, at Cincinnati,⁴ renominated Barker and Don-

² *Indianapolis Journal*, Feb. 23, 1900.

³ *Indianapolis Journal*, Feb. 20, 1900.

⁴ The platform constructed at Cincinnati convention was made up of the following planks:

The initiative, referendum and recall, government ownership of natural monopolies, the income and inheritance tax, and the direct election of the President and Vice-President, federal judges and United States Senators were advocated. The convention also declared for the issuance of irredeemable paper money based upon the wealth and resources of the country with free coinage until the adoption of such a policy. Railroad, corporational, and alien ownership of land was denounced. The solution of the trust problem was said to consist in the public ownership of public utilities. *Indianapolis Journal*, May 11, 1900.

nelly, while the fusionists, at Sioux Falls,⁵ put up W. J. Bryan and Charles A. Towne, of Minnesota.⁶

It would be tedious and unprofitable to give a detailed account of the further activities of the party in the period from 1900 until its lingering death, a few years later. State conventions were regularly held up to 1908, candidates nominated and platforms constructed. The party's demands continued in the same strain as before—governmental reform, greater power for the people, denunciation of monopoly in all its forms, and justice to labor. The following of the party gradually dwindled away until only a few faithfuls remained. In 1902 the vote cast for the head of the ticket, William B. Gill,⁷ was only 1,350. In 1904 Leroy Templeton, for Governor, rallied 2,065 voters to his standard, but in 1906 the following of John W. Clark, the candidate for secretary of state, sank to 972. The number of votes polled by Benjamin F. Wheeler in 1908 was but 1,193.⁸

A noteworthy plank in the platform of 1902 demanded that the legislature, under Article V of the Federal Constitution, force the calling of a national constitutional amendment to provide for the election of United States senators by direct vote and to allow a tax on incomes. Both these demands materialized a decade later.

CONCLUSION

The Populist party may be considered a phase of that radicalism in American politics which began in the Granger movement of the seventies and eighties, and which found its latest expression in the Progressive party of 1912. The

⁵ This convention drew up a platform of numerous and varied principles. The usual principles in regard to land, labor, money and government control of natural monopolies were set forth. The initiative and referendum, and the free coinage of silver were called for. Imperialism, customs duties in Porto Rico and militarism were denounced. The assembly agreed with the Cincinnati convention in that the solution of the trust problem was the public ownership of utilities. Another declaration demanded the abolition of all tariffs on goods controlled by trusts. *Indianapolis Journal*, May 11, 1900.

⁶ Charles A. Towne was born in Ingham county, Michigan, in 1859. He graduated from the University of Michigan in the academic and law courses. After practicing law for a time at Marquette, Michigan, he went to Duluth, Minnesota, in 1890. Until 1896 he was a Republican.

⁷ Populist State Senator in 1896.

⁸ These figures are taken from Reports of the Secretary of State in the *Documentary Journals* for the years indicated.

main issues of the Grangers were "reform" and railroad legislation; of the Greenbackers, "reform" and fiat money. Combining these principles into a single movement, the Populists added others which, in time, constituted the chief demands of the Progressives. The direct election of United States senators, the initiative and referendum, woman's suffrage and the inheritance and income tax—the most important planks in the Progressive platform—were all old Populist demands.

Indirectly the Populist party was the successor to the earlier Greenback and the Union Labor parties, but directly it was the outgrowth of the Farmers' Alliance. The Alliance, after having tried in vain to graft itself into one of the old parties entered independently into the political field. The Populist party was the result. The other agrarian organizations were so far eclipsed by the alliance that their influence was almost negligible, yet an important relation existed. H. E. Taubeneck, speaking, in 1891, said:

The Alliance, the F.M.B.A., the Grange, the Knights of Labor are nothing more or less than industrial schools whose one object is to teach to the industrial masses the principles of economic government that we call for. All of these organizations are working for a common end and the People's party reaches out and takes them all in. The People's party most certainly expects to get out a national ticket and it will receive hearty support from Alliance men and members of the F.M.B.A. This can be done and still these organizations will retain their individuality and separate organizations.⁹

As a matter of fact, as later events proved, these organizations did not retain their individuality, the Alliance, particularly, being wrecked on the rocks of party politics.

The Populist party was pre-eminently a farmers' party. Because of the superficial resemblance between the demands of the farmers and those of the laborers, efforts were made to include in the movement the labor element. But such an alliance was necessarily doomed to early dissolution. The fundamental differences between the two classes were too great and the common interests too few to admit of complete amalgamation. In fact, labor leaders openly objected to participating in the Alliance on the ground that it was too agricultural. What the Populist party lacked in the view of the

⁹ *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 16, 1891.

laborers the Socialist party supplied. Hence, in the middle nineties one sees the beginnings of a new party, the party of the wage-earner, which within a few years grew to a strength rivalling that of the Populist party in its palmy days. Significant, and more than a mere coincidence, is the fact that simultaneously with the decline of Populism occurred the rise of Socialism.

While there was doubtless much that was unsound in Populism, the importance of the movement is best shown by the fact that the wildest dreams of the Populists of yesterday have become the commonplaces of today. Many of their demands, if not actually matters of legal enactment, at least hold a favorable place in public opinion. Debtors' exemption from taxation, the income tax, postal savings banks, the initiative and referendum, direct election of United States senators, the inheritance tax, industrial arbitration, municipal ownership, six per cent legal interest, woman's suffrage—all important and persistent planks in the Populists' platforms—are now incorporated into either State or national law. Even the sub-treasury plan, considered at the time the most radical and absurd of the farmers' ideas, finds a present-day counterpart in the farm loan and credit act of 1916. Though differing in method, the two plans aim to accomplish much the same thing, and strike at the same weakness in our agricultural system.

Whatever our political convictions by nature or nurture, we cannot doubt the sincerity of the Populist movement. The men in 1890 who launched the new party were convinced that a real danger threatened the republic. Though their action was inspired by the interests of a class, that class, to their mind, constituted the backbone and hope of the nation. It was the battle of the masses against the selfish interests of the few.